



Career-changing experience from ASEM-DUO

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„The benefits of studying abroad are almost endless.“

-Michelle Obama

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Embarking on an exchange semester in Korea through the ASEM-DUO program has been a career-changing experience that has profoundly influenced my professional trajectory as a graphic designer. In this essay, I will delve into the significant impact that my time abroad has had on my career, highlighting the newfound skills, perspectives, and personal growth that have set me apart in the field of graphic design.

Professional Recognition and Soft Skills

After my exchange semester in 2022, I was required to attend job interviews for internship positions in the graphics design industry.

During this period, I realized the significant impact of my exchange semester on my professional career. In every job interview, employers and human resources managers brought up my exchange semester and asked about my experience. Many expressed deep interest in my time spent in Korea and how it influenced my personality. Even before securing a job position, I could sense the positive impact of my exchange semester, setting me apart from other candidates.

This kind of positive recognition and interest is also evident among my coworkers and the people that I connect and work with. The value placed on my exchange semester experiences and the eagerness to hear about them underscored the transformative nature of this career-shaping journey.

Employers see an advantage in applicants who have completed an exchange semester, because they understand that such people possess a more profound and well-defined set of soft skills. It is widely acknowledged that exchange semesters abroad enhance personal confidence. Someone who has lived in a new environment and has proven that they can achieve their goals has a different set of confidence than a person who did not take on big challenges in life at all. The same reasons also lead to better problem-solving skills and risk-taking abilities.

After the global pandemic, many work environments had to shift their workplaces from offices to homes. Working from home became the new standard for many of us, and the adaptation process took some time. After my experience abroad, I can say that not only am I able to work from home, but I can also live and work in a completely different country and environment. I can adjust myself to change and reach the point of gear dynamic inside the group much more quickly.

Cultural Diversity and Communication Skills

My exchange semester in Korea has also provided me with a deep understanding of cultural diversity and the ability to work effectively in multicultural teams. Working in diverse teams, I understood how valuable it is to exchange different opinions from different backgrounds. Especially in design, the field I work in, opinions and different perspectives are welcomed and necessary to improve oneself. Therefore I used this opportunity to develop and refine my communication and collaboration skills. Communicating clearly in a group that speaks the same language is already a big challenge, but I was able to intensify my communication skills in such a way that led me to understand that language barriers were no longer a big obstacle. Anything is possible with sufficient dedication and effort.

Influence on Design Style and Vision

Beyond all the skills I gathered, my time abroad also influenced my design style, vision, and personal goals. It helped me define all these aspects more precisely. With its unique blend of traditional values and modern advancements, Korea exposed me to a rich cultural tapestry that challenged my perspectives and expanded my horizons. At my Korean university, I became familiar with Korean design trends, design structures, and focuses that are not represented as much in Germany. Especially branding is a strong field of design in Korea, so it was inspiring to look around and see how Communication Design is currently being approached in Korea.

Specifically within my field of work, I gained a broader perspective on design thinking than before my exchange semester. I can confidently state that my thoughts on design are not confined to any particular country and transcend borders. My thought process is now more global and advanced. My horizon has expanded and I now think much wider in my design process than ever before. This makes my design work more diverse and globally appealing.

Future Aspirations and Language Acquisition

My professional goal is to be flexible and be able to work from different locations around the world. I want to be so versatile and open-minded in my work that I can collaborate with other creatives in any environment. My exchange semester in Korea was a great opportunity to discover my interest and potential in this field.

Another benefit of my exchange semester is that it has introduced me to Hangul. This may seem like a personal benefit at first, but it is also an advantage for my professional career. Other than having one more language skill to offer to employers, I see a special potential in Hangul. The geometric shapes of Hangul are versatile and optimal for use in graphic design. The harmony of letters make a design, especially in poster or print design, more appealing. I am currently visiting a Korean class to learn the Korean language and to be able to use it properly in my design work.

Conclusion

In conclusion, my exchange semester through ASEM-DUO boosted both my personal and professional journey. The recognition, interest, and curiosity elicited by my experiences in Korea have already set me apart in the graphic design industry. The enhanced soft skills, deep understanding of cultural diversity, refined communication abilities, and expanded design perspectives I have acquired during my time abroad have shaped me into a more well-rounded and globally-minded professional.

This life-changing experience has provided me with invaluable experiences, skills, and insights that would not have been possible without the ASEM-DUO exchange program. I have grown both personally and professionally, gaining clarity about my future career aspirations and the path I wish to shape. The impact on my career as a communication designer has been substantial, and I eagerly anticipate the future opportunities and advantages that will continue to unfold as a result of this transformative journey.

„Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness.“

-Mark Twain